

SECTION II

FEDERAL-AID TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING PROCESS



Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21), similar to previous federal transportation authorizations, includes requirements for transportation planning in urbanized areas. This section summarizes the planning process in the Salt Lake/ West Valley and the Ogden/ Layton Urban Areas. The chart on the preceding page outlines key steps and inputs during this process. The following paragraphs discuss several of these steps and inputs.

ADVISORY COMMITTEES

As described in the previous section, WFRC as the MPO is responsible for the transportation planning process in the Salt Lake/ West Valley and Ogden/ Layton Urbanized Areas. WFRC's committees help local governments, UDOT, UTA, other stakeholders and the public to participate in the process. The Transportation Coordinating Committee (Trans Com) is a policy advisory committee of the Regional Council regarding short-range transportation planning. This committee is composed of elected officials and major transportation agency representatives and serves as the forum for discussion of short range transportation issues and policies. The Transportation Improvement Program and any amendments to it are reviewed by Trans Com before being recommended to the Regional Council for approval.

The Regional Council has also established a Regional Growth Committee (RGC) as a policy advisory committee of the Regional Council. The committee is comprised of members and representatives from the Regional Council, County Councils of Governments, and various cities, counties, state, federal and other agencies and interest groups concerned with regional transportation and growth-related planning. The Committee serves as the policy advisory body to the Regional Council on long-range transportation planning, land use and other growth issues. The RGC is responsible for the Regional Long-Range Transportation Plan, corridor preservation, and developing regional growth planning strategies in cooperation and coordination with local governments, Utah Department of Transportation, Utah Transit Authority, and other organizations and stakeholders. The WFRC can appoint Sub-Committees under the RGC as needed and appropriate.

Each of the two urbanized areas, Salt Lake/ West Valley and the Ogden/ Layton, is represented at the technical level by the Regional Growth Technical Advisory Committees and the Trans Com Technical Advisory Committees. These committees are composed of engineers and planners working for the various jurisdictions within the respective urbanized areas. Their responsibility is to advise the RGC, Trans Com and the Regional Council on technical matters related to their respective transportation planning processes. Each committee also serves as a forum for discussion of inter-jurisdictional transportation problems and is used to provide technical information to the various agencies. The development of transportation plans and programs is begun at these Technical Advisory Committees.

Each of the three urban counties within the Region has a County Council of Governments (COG). These committees generally consist of elected officials representing the county and each of the cities within the county. The three COGs are given an opportunity to review and comment on all transportation plans and programs for the Region.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Citizen input is an important step in the development of plans and programs that meet the area's transportation needs while minimizing any negative environmental or social impact. The WFRC's transportation planning process provides for citizen review of their transportation plans and programs through a 30-day comment period for both the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) along with other public information programs. These programs include the publication of newsletters, public meetings held each year to discuss the development of plans and programs, the dissemination of information to the news media, including television, radio, and newspapers, and discussions with individuals and groups as requested. The Wasatch Front Regional Council also participates in numerous public meetings. The Wasatch Front Regional Council continues to build upon their public involvement procedures to remain current with federal requirements.. Each year, WFRC actively seeks comment from organizations and individuals about the proposed projects in the TIP.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN (RTP)

The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) consists of highway, transit, and other transportation improvements to meet the 20+ year needs of the area. Traffic forecasting models are used to project future traffic based on forecasted land use characteristics. These travel forecasts are used to identify the needed improvements to the transportation system. Next, alternative plans to meet these needs are evaluated for their impacts on the system and the environment. Costs of improvements are compared with potential revenues and phasing plans developed. Finally, a recommended Regional Transportation Plan is approved.

The Regional Growth Technical Advisory Committees begin the process of developing and evaluating the Regional Transportation Plan. The Regional Growth Committee, the County Councils of Governments, and the public all have an opportunity to review the recommendations before the Regional Council gives its final approval. MAP-21 requires the Regional Transportation Plan be reviewed and updated at least every four years. The plan must also be found to conform to State Air Quality plans. Projects on the Plan are implemented through the programming of funds in the Transportation Improvement Program.

FISCAL CONSTRAINT

In order for a project to be included in the TIP, funding availability must be demonstrated. This funding includes anticipated federal dollars as well as state and local funding that has been committed to particular projects. All of the projects listed in the TIP are funded with the sources listed in the previous section. The financial plan for the TIP can be found in section IV of this document.

AIR QUALITY

As projects are evaluated for inclusion in the TIP, the State Air Quality Implementation Plan (SIP) is reviewed for recommended Traffic Control Measures which need to be implemented. These measures are given priority in selecting projects for the TIP. Once the TIP is compiled, the WFRC conducts an analysis to determine if the TIP conforms to the state air quality plans. This conformity analysis is made available to the State Division of Air Quality and the public for review and comment. The Federal Highway and Transit Administrations must concur in this finding.

TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP)

Eligible projects are identified for each of the funding categories. Projects are evaluated and priorities set within each funding source. The projects receiving the highest priority are included in each program. These separate programs are then combined to form the TIP. The Wasatch Front Regional Council, in consultation with UDOT and UTA, is responsible for developing the Salt Lake/ West Valley and Ogden/ Layton Area Transportation Improvement Program.

The TIP along with the air quality conformity determination is submitted to Trans Com annually for their review. The Councils of Governments also have an opportunity to review and comment on the TIP. Appropriate adjustments are made and a final TIP is developed. The final conforming TIP is then recommended to the WFRC for its approval. Following Regional Council approval, the Executive Director of UDOT (as the Governor's designee) must review and approve the TIP and the Utah State Transportation Commission must include the TIP without modification in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program.

FUND AUTHORIZATION AND OBLIGATION FOR FEDERAL-AID PROJECTS

For federally-funded projects, all project development must follow the procedures as outlined in the federal guidelines. The steps include the completion of environmental studies, preliminary engineering, the purchase of the necessary right-of-way, and the preparation of final plans, specifications, and estimates. The federal guidelines say that each of these steps is eligible to receive federal funds, although it is the policy of the WFRC that sponsors of Urban Surface Transportation Program (STP), Congestion Mitigation / Air Quality Program (CMAQ), and Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) projects use their own funds for project concept development, some preliminary engineering, and environmental studies. Upon completion and approval of the environmental document, the project sponsors request authorization from the Federal Highway Administration to obligate funds for the design study report (DSR), purchasing of right-of-way (ROW), final design (PS&E), and construction. For Federal-Aid Transit projects, UTA and UDOT apply directly to the Federal Transit Administration for fund approval. The priorities set in developing the program will determine which projects will be able to receive funding. The priorities can be amended at any time by policy action of the WFRC.

